



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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District of Arizona*

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HONDURAN RECEIVES 25 YEARS FOR ARMED HOSTAGE TAKING WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT

PHOENIX, Ariz.— Francis Luna-Lara, 31 of Honduras was sentenced here on June 5, 2006, to 25 years by U.S. District Judge Roslyn O. Silver. Luna-Lara pleaded guilty on October 22, 2005, to Possessing and Brandishing a firearm, during and in relation to a crime of violence, hostage taking.

On October 16, 2003, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Phoenix Police Department located an alien stash house in Phoenix, AZ. Sixteen undocumented aliens, one of whom was a nine year old female, were found at the residence and four were federally prosecuted for alien smuggling and hostage taking: Luna-Lara, Victor Manuel Velasquez, Gerardo Eufemio Cardenas-Osorio and Daniel Samaniego-Cachon. Investigation revealed that Luna-Lara and Samaniego-Cachon sexually assaulted three women who were being held hostage at gunpoint. These two men went into state custody and both later pled guilty to Sexual Assault in Maricopa County Superior Court. Luna-Lara received a sentenced of 12 years and was released to federal custody on January 25, 2005, to face federal charges. He pled to an Information charging 18 U.S.C. Section 924(c), Possessing and Brandishing a firearm, during and in relation to a crime of violence, hostage taking. Luna-Lara admitted to guarding the undocumented aliens at gunpoint until their smuggling fee was paid. When sentencing the defendant to 25 years, Judge Silver stated that Luna-Lara's conduct "amounts to torture". She further stated that the victims "didn't come into the United States with the notion that they would be abused."

Two of the other defendants were sentenced in 2005. Velasquez received 80 months for Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal Aliens after it was determined that he was one of the alien smuggling leaders but there was no evidence that he condoned the sexual assaults. Cardenas-Osorio also pled to Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal aliens but had only recently joined the illegal activity. He was sentenced to 746 days. Samaniego-Cachon is set for trial in September 2006.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Phoenix Police Department . The prosecution is being handled by Lisa Jennis Settel, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Ariz.

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